

Diminishing standards. Part 3, David Hitchen concludes the story

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): - **(2010)**

Heft 102

PDF erstellt am: **28.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854421>

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DIMINISHING STANDARDS - Part 3

David Hitchen concludes the story



TPG bogie car 714 + trailer 312 Place Neuve, Geneva.

All Swiss Photos: Neil Wheelwright

Luzern had a small tramway system which ordered a small batch of pedal-controlled "Swiss Standard" trams from Schindler Waggonfabrik A.G., Pratteln, (SWP) with Brown Boveri & Cie, Baden, (BBC) electrics and these (101-106) arrived in 1947/8. A second batch were constructed later in 1948 (107-110), however these were unique in being built by Corrossierre Hess A.G. Bullach und Solothurn, an organisation that was usually associated with bus and trolleybus construction. No trailers appear to have been provided for either batch. Alas these ten trams were destined to have a very short career as the tramway closed completely in November 1961 and was converted to trolleybus operation. All ten trams were acquired by Genève as Nos. 731-740.,

Genève was late in ordering Swiss Standard trams but 30 pedal-controlled

examples (701-730) were built by SWP in 1950/2, with the electrical equipment supplied by S.A. des Ateliers de Secheron, Genève (SAAS). In 1951 SWP and FFA (Flug und Fahrzeugwerke A.G., Altenrhein) supplied 15 trailers (301-315). As noted above Luzern's ten "Swiss Standards" (101-110) were added to the fleet (731-740) in 1961, and it is understood that these were subsequently rebuilt into trailers (321-330) in 1969/70.

Like many towns and cities Genève commenced a closure plan for its tramway network alongside a conversion and expansion of its trolleybus system. Fortunately, at the eleventh hour, the conversion was suspended when the tramway had been reduced to a single remaining line across the city - Route 12. In 1984 a new prototype articulated tram was trialled and following its instant success 45 more were delivered in

1987/9. These comfortable modern units were coupled in pairs as they attracted more and more passengers but even so, with just a single route remaining, there was no requirement for the older trams and they were duly withdrawn from service. Some of these Genève “Swiss Standards” were sent for further service to Sibiu in Romania where they may still be in service. Tram 729, trailer 308 and trailer 329 (a former Luzern tram) have been saved for preservation. Genève has now turned the tide and is expanding its tramway network including reintroducing trams to some of its trolleybus routes.

Neuchâtel also has a small tramway system run by Transports en commun de Neuchâtel et environs SA (TN) and in 1947 it introduced three “Swiss Standard” trams (81-83) built by Schweizerische Industriegesellschaft, Neuhausen-am-Rheinfall, (SIG) and SAAS. These were a unique variant on the “Swiss Standard” as they were the only double-ended ones to enter service. Renumbered 581-583 in 1984 they did not last much longer as 581 was scrapped, 582 went as an exhibit to the Verkehrshaus Museum in Luzern and 583 joined the tramway collection of the ANAT preservation group. In 1967 Neuchâtel purchased four articulated trams from Genoa that incorporated certain features of the “Swiss Standard” design.



1. TPG trailer 309 + bogie car 711 Place Neuve, Geneva, 3.1984.
2. TPG, the very new prototype articulated tram 741 plus bogie cars including 706 & 702 in Jonction depot, Geneva, 3.1984.
3. TPG bogie car 707 + ex-Luzern trailer 323 Carouge, Geneva, 5.1985.



These had been built in Italy in 1942 by a consortium of SPA Officina Meccania della Stange, Padova, plus Tecnomasio Italiano Brown Boveri, Milano and S.A. Ernesto Bred, Milano becoming Nos. 1101-4 in the Genoa fleet. Numbered 591-594 by Neuchâtel they remained in service until 1984/8 when three were scrapped and 592 was preserved by ANAT.

The success of the "Swiss Standard" concept prompted a number of railways to investigate the inclusion of a number of its excellent features into their rolling stock. In 1946 the Bern-Worb-Bahnen (BWB) rebuilt a 1925 Ce4/4 No.40 with this modern equipment to investigate potential improvements. This later became No.71 and it eventually moved on to the Montreux Oberland Bernois (MOB). The upgrade to this unit was obviously approved as in 1948 Ce4/4 Nos.41 and 42 were built for the BWB with these improvements. These became Nos.72 and 73 before they too ended their days with the MOB. It is understood that the BWB also modified their driving trailers CFt Nos.242-243, and BDt 244-245 with such features.

Another line that adapted some of their stock was the Gruyere-Fribourg-Morat (GFM) when they had SIG/BBC build their BCe4/4 standard gauge units Nos.161-167 between 1946 and 1948. In 1951 they also rebuilt BCFe2/4 155 (built 1931) with this updated equipment. It is believed that the Forchbahn (FB), the Ferrovie autolinee



regionali ticinese (FART) and the Ferrovia Luganese SA (FLP) were other Swiss railways that also involved themselves with this technology. In 1952 the FMB a Barcelona-based 1672mm-gauge line had ten units incorporating "Swiss Standard" technology built for them, and these remained in service until 1987.

It can be concluded that the "Swiss Standard" tram really did merit some form of recognition as its achievements spread beyond the Swiss borders. It is also great testimony to the rugged design, and to thorough Swiss maintenance regimes, that some of these iconic trams are still in revenue service, albeit far from their natural homeland, some 60 years after their initial construction.

Long live the Swiss Standard tramcar!

Editor's note. Apart from supplying photographs from his extensive collection Neil Wheelwright has been kind enough to assist in editing this article.

1. TN 583 Place Pury, Neuchatel, 5.1985.

2. TN 583 Evole depot, Neuchatel, 5.1985.

3. TN 582 lakeside between Evole & Place Pury, Neuchatel, 5.1985.

4. Preserved TPG bogie car 729 during open day at Bachet de Pesay depot, Geneva, 3.1993.

5. Preserved TPG trailer 308 (+ bogie car 729) during open day at Bachet de Pesay depot, Geneva, 3.1993.

6. PHOTO: Rob Boyce. These ex-Zurich trams now operate to the Kumsusan Memorial Place, also known as the Kim Il-Sung Mausoleum situated in the north east of Pyongyang in North Korea.

